

For Immediate Release
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Mountain Bike Orienteering at the Canmore Nordic Centre

It's been a full season of orienteering in the Bow Valley with well attended events all season long. The final orienteering event of the year will be a mountain bike orienteering event at the Canmore Nordic Centre on Saturday October 4.

In mountain bike orienteering participants race on bikes using a detailed map to navigate to a sequence of checkpoints marked on the map. The courses test riding skills, physical strength and endurance, and navigational expertise. "The Canmore Nordic Centre is an ideal venue for mountain bike orienteering because of the dense trail network", explains Canadian Orienteering Federation President Charlotte MacNaughton. "The fastest competitors will ride quickly on their bikes but not so fast that they can't keep track of where they are and where they need to go to find the checkpoints."

The event at the Canmore Nordic Center on October 4th begins with a free clinic in the Day Lodge at 9:00 am. The race starts at 10:30 am and the awards will be at 1:00 pm. Cyclists and orienteers of all levels are welcome. Participants will choose between a longer course that will take about 45 minutes for the fastest riders and a short course which will take about 20 minutes for the fastest. Both courses have intermediate navigational difficulty. Participants will be riding on double track or the gentler single tracks - though the fastest routes will include intermediate-level single track. Expert riders will also have the option to take the most difficult trails if they want to.

The race courses have been set by Margus Hallik who has twice finished fourth at the World Mountain Biking Championships representing Estonia. Margus explains that "the area is very good for mountain bike orienteering. With a dense trail network, it is navigationally demanding and with the elevation differences it requires good fitness. The Nordic Centre offers very cool terrain and would be challenging enough for any international level competition." Hallik, who was temporarily living in Canada, says that "my mountain bike orienteering friends are jealous that I have the honour to set courses at the 1988 Olympic venue".

Adrian Zissos, the event organizer, explains that "all levels are welcome to attend. The fastest participants will be riding quickly, but participants can go at their own pace and families are welcome to go out together."

The participants need to provide their own mountain bike and helmet and the organizers will provide the instruction and orienteering map. The entry fee is \$10 before Oct 1 and \$20 after that date. Further information is available at www.barebones.ca/canmore.

Mountain bike orienteering is the newest of the orienteering disciplines administered by the International Orienteering Federation. The 2009 World Championships are in Israel.

For more information
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Backgrounder

What is Orienteering?

Originally developed over 100 years ago in Scandinavia, orienteering has grown as a sport to the point where races are held in over 60 countries worldwide every year, and the International Orienteering Federation has expanded to include some 70 member nations, and is actively developing the possibility of orienteering being added as an Olympic event. The sport itself requires competitors to navigate to designated checkpoints using map and compass through unknown terrain. While most races involve high-speed cross-country running, other popular variations include orienteering on mountain bikes or on Nordic skis. With recent increases in Adventure Racing, orienteering has gained popularity amongst adventure racers looking for an opportunity to enhance their navigational skills.

Orienteering appeals to outdoor-oriented athletes – people who enjoy being active in the fresh, clean air. It features a very low environmental impact, and encourages participants to respect and appreciate nature. It is a non-violent sport, and is free from doping scandals and other controversies.

At the elite level, Canada has been regularly represented at the World Championships for more than 35 years. This year, members of the Canadian Team will be competing at World Championships, Junior World Championships, World Cup series, as well as numerous regional and national races across North America. These races will include over 40,000 competitors and spectators, as well as multi-format media coverage.

At the recreational level, orienteering is a good way for all members of the family to enjoy the outdoors while learning navigational skills and developing comfort in the wilderness. Weekend warriors enjoy the physical challenge of running, biking or skiing while solving the mental challenges of navigation and route choice presented by the course planner. All orienteering events have a variety of courses available for participants to choose from, ranging from short and technically easy courses for the youngsters, to long and technically challenging for the elites.

While the core of the international racing season lasts from May-September, most regions are active and conduct orienteering events year-round. Major races are typically held between April and November each year. The North American racing schedule includes dozens of significant (100+ participants) races yearly, with an even greater number of smaller races.

For more information:

Orienteering Events in Canmore	www.barebones.ca/Canmore
Foothills Wanderers Orienteering Club	www.orienteeringCalgary.ca
Alberta Orienteering Association	www.orienteeringAlberta.ca
Canadian Orienteering Federation	www.orienteering.ca
International Orienteering Federation	www.orienteering.org